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Substantive session of 2010
High-level segment

Provisional summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 28 June 2010, at 9.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Ali ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.20 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The President** declared open the substantive session of 2010.

2. *A film provided by the United Nations Population Fund was projected.*

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2010/100, E/2010/L.5, E/2010/L.6, E/2010/97 and E/2010/CRP.1)

3. *The provisional agenda, as contained in document E/2010/100, was adopted.*

4. **The President** drew attention to the proposed programme of work for the substantive session of 2010 (E/2010/L.5). The order of the national voluntary presentations and the time of a keynote address had been changed.

5. *The proposed programme of work, as orally revised, was adopted.*

Requests from non-governmental organizations to be heard by the Economic and Social Council

6. **The President** drew attention to the requests from non-governmental organizations for hearings before the Economic and Social Council, contained in document E/2010/97. At its resumed 2010 session, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had decided to recommend that the organizations mentioned in document E/2010/97 should be heard during the high-level segment of the 2010 substantive session of the Council under the corresponding agenda item. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the Committee's recommendation, contained in document E/2010/97.

7. *It was so decided.*

Statement by the President

8. **The President** said that the high-level segment was an occasion to focus on some of the most pressing issues in development, made more challenging by the subdued pace of economic recovery. That was particularly true for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

9. As the most important and high-profile events in the Council's calendar, the substantive session and in particular, the high-level segment, played an important role in continuous efforts to revitalize the Council and to ensure the continued relevance of the United Nations in the area of development and social and cultural affairs. In a results-based era, the United Nations, and the Council, must not only bring to the global governance debate the legitimacy it possessed, given its representative nature, but also a capacity to galvanize and implement effectively international action to overcome collective challenges.

10. The high-level segment must therefore not only be a forum for the exchange of views and experiences, but also produce tangible results, whether in terms of policy guidance or the promotion of coherence, and those results must be understood by the public at large, so they could be judged in the court of public opinion.

11. For that reason, he had challenged all delegations to formulate and agree on a Ministerial Declaration that was not only short and action-oriented, but also understandable by all as a collective expression of the international community. Long and ambiguous statements must be a thing of the past and delegations had to remain flexible to ensure progress in that regard.

12. The Council must change. It must adopt a proactive and constructive agenda, and its actions must be purposeful; it must adopt shorter and more focused agreements and resolutions, producing results, not words; it must improve the atmosphere in which its deliberations took place, promoting greater transparency and honest dialogue so that concerns were clearly understood; it must move beyond stale arguments; and it must do justice to its role in the operational aspects of the work of the United Nations.

13. That message had already led to a renewed spirit of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which could only benefit the world's poorest and most marginalized.

14. The theme of the annual ministerial review was particularly opportune as, too often, women were the poorest and most marginalized. The theme would enable the Council to strengthen the linkages between gender equality, women's human rights and non-discrimination as a basis for progress towards achieving development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, none of the

Goals would be achieved unless women had a greater say in their own development.

15. Key obstacles to gender equality had been explored in preparation for the annual ministerial review. At its special event entitled "Engaging philanthropy to promote gender equality and women's empowerment", the Council had also addressed innovative partnerships and sources of funding, and cooperation to end violence against women and to promote their economic empowerment. The Global Preparatory Meeting for the 2010 high-level segment had sent a clear message: rural women were a critical force in reducing poverty and hunger and must be empowered if countries were to reach their development goals. The national voluntary presentations would offer an inside look at efforts to promote gender equality and empower women.

16. The second Development Cooperation Forum would be an opportunity to accelerate progress in strengthening the global partnership for development. Development cooperation faced competing demands on policies and aid flows in the wake of the economic and financial crises. Despite steady levels of aid, commitments made at the United Nations and the Group of Eight summits had not been honoured. Mandated to be inclusive and receive a wide range of inputs, the Forum could become the main venue for global dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation were it not for the fact that it was biennial, produced only a Chair's summary, and was not institutionally linked to other development cooperation processes within or outside the United Nations. That issue would have to be addressed by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session when it reviewed its resolution 61/16 on strengthening of the Council.

Address by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

17. **The Secretary-General** said that the world was still grappling with the aftershocks of multiple crises. The financial, food and climate crises had set back efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals and had threatened future progress. All countries lived under the shadow of continued global financial and economic uncertainty. The recovery from the most severe recession in recent history had been tentative and uneven. It could not compensate for the losses suffered. Tens of millions of people had been pushed into extreme poverty.

18. However, despite those setbacks, there was reason for optimism. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010 showed that significant progress had been made in some countries towards reducing extreme poverty in the previous decade. The overall poverty rate was expected to fall to 15 per cent by 2015 — that would be half of 1990 levels. More children than ever before now had access to education. Global school enrolment stood at 85 per cent. Many countries had crossed the 90 per cent threshold. There had been significant declines in child mortality and the incidence of measles, malaria and neglected tropical diseases. There had also been dramatic increases in access to antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS. Tens of millions of lives had been saved through collective action by Governments, civil society and international organizations. Those successes, many of which had taken place in the world's poorest countries, showed that the Millennium Development Goals were achievable. They showed that making an effort led to success; not making an effort led to failure. The recipe was clear: the right policies, adequate investment and reliable international support.

19. However, he wished to interject a note of caution. Overall progress had been uneven. Several goals would probably be missed, especially in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries in or emerging from conflict. Climate change remained a threat to sustainability. Hunger and food insecurity stalked millions. Stubborn disparities persisted, between rich and poor, between rural and urban and between males and females. The vast majority of the world's people still needed, and deserved, drastic improvements in their quality of life. They needed a world where the benefits of economic and social development reached everyone, a world where the major economies were held accountable to their many commitments.

20. That was the message he would take to the Millennium Development Goals Summit in September. That was the message he had delivered to the leaders of the Group of Twenty (G-20) the previous weekend, in Toronto. He had been encouraged by the commitment of leaders there to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals, despite the challenges they faced. The next G-20 Summit, in Seoul in November, would include development on the agenda

for the first time. Governments must agree on a concrete action plan that provided a clear road map to meet their promises by 2015. Results for the world's most vulnerable must be delivered.

21. As the central forum of the United Nations for international economic and social issues, the Council had an important role to play. He saw three urgent areas for focus. First, jobs, because world unemployment was the highest on record: 211 million people were unemployed, and 470 million jobs had to be created in the next 10 years. It was time to focus on decent work, in all nations, not just the wealthy ones, on common-sense investment in green jobs, and a green economy. Second, food security, because worldwide, more than 1 billion people were hungry. The response to that unprecedented number must be to deliver on the commitments made in L'Aquila, Italy. He called for investment in the world's small farmers. They produced most of the world's food and were the mainstays of developing economies. Third, investment in women, because that was where progress was most needed.

22. Social, political and economic equality for women was integral to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Until women and girls were liberated from poverty and injustice, all goals — peace, security and sustainable development — stood in jeopardy. It was therefore most appropriate that the current session of the Economic and Social Council was focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. Empowering women was an economic and social imperative. Of the 72 million children of primary-school age still excluded from school systems, two thirds were girls. Women held only 18 per cent of the world's parliamentary seats. And throughout the world, too many women lived in fear of violence. Violence against women was a crime, and must not be acceptable in any culture. In too many countries, policies, legal frameworks and social justice systems were just not adequate.

23. Of all the Millennium Development Goals, the one where least success had been achieved was on maternal health. Each year, between 10 and 15 million women suffered long-term disability due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Every year, more than a million children were left motherless. In the twenty-first century, it was unacceptable that mothers should still be dying as they delivered new life. He urged the Council to generate support for the joint action plan on women's and children's health. It had a crucial role to play in making women central to all future negotiations on development. The outcome of the 15-year review of the Beijing Declaration should feed directly into the Council's negotiations, and into the outcome of the Millennium Development Goals Summit in September.

24. Governments must be urged to change attitudes and policies towards women and girls. Inequality and discrimination must be ended, and women and girls must be made aware of their inalienable rights. It was a landmark year for gender issues in which the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) were being commemorated, to name but a few highlights.

25. The world was on track for another major step forward. He welcomed the decision by the General Assembly at its sixty-third session to merge the four United Nations gender entities into a composite entity. He was closely following the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations during the current session that would make that a reality. The creation of UN Women would mark a significant advance towards further strengthening the Organization's capacity to work with Member States to coherently meet the needs of women and girls. All countries must deliver as they collectively tackled global crises and worked towards the Millennium Development Goals.

26. Women must be included at all levels of political decision-making. There must be a stronger political commitment to change laws and policies that discriminated against them. Women's contributions in homes and in workplaces were essential to improving food security, to building community resilience to climate change and natural disasters, and to finding lasting solutions to poverty. He counted on Council members to maintain focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the negotiations at the annual ministerial review and at the Development Cooperation Forum. He urged the Council to consider how to expand national efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals. Each Goal was achievable. The tools were there. They must be matched with political will and cooperation.

Keynote addresses on the theme: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women"

27. **Mr. Mitchell** (United Kingdom), Secretary of State for International Development, said that the focus of the meeting: gender equality and the role of women in development, peace and security, was an issue of importance to the United Kingdom. Indeed, a renewed international effort was needed to support the opportunities, rights, health and status of women and girls around the world; their place in development could not be overstated.

28. Greater support for girls would replace the vicious circle of limited education, poor employment opportunities, ill health, forced marriage and, all too frequently, violence and exploitation with a virtuous one that put women at the heart of their families and their communities.

29. The United Nations had a leading role to play in gender equality. The High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September, would be an important opportunity to put investment in women and girls at the heart of an action agenda to meet the Goals by 2015.

30. Women also played a vital role in preventing and resolving conflict. Welcoming the appointment of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in February, he said that the work of the United Nations in combating violence, especially sexual violence during conflict, was to be applauded and continued by the international community.

31. The United Nations must show leadership by mainstreaming and prioritizing gender equality in all its work, which must be coherent and effective in supporting women's empowerment and in promoting and protecting women's rights and security. The process to create a single United Nations body to lead the women's agenda must be concluded quickly so that it could begin its work. The entity would need to take a practical and common-sense approach to make a real difference to real women in real time in the real world, and it must be well managed by a skilled and enthusiastic leader so that it would receive the financial contributions it needed.

32. The Millennium Development Goals would not be achievable without a renewed focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. Special emphasis must be placed on reproductive and maternal health. A disproportionate number of deaths among infants and children under five years of age took place in fragile and conflict-affected settings which, in addition, accounted for three quarters of births unsupported by medical attendance. Despite progress, more than a third of a million women died due to complications in pregnancy or childbirth every year. Most of those deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and young women were particularly vulnerable. The new coalition Government of the United Kingdom was giving priority to tackling that Millennium Development Goal. It would stand by its commitment of spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2013. The Prime Minister had called on the Group of Eight to agree on a strong package of support for maternal health focused around good-quality care and stronger health systems.

33. The impact of the United Nations on maternal mortality could be increased by using its resources and skills more strategically and adopting innovations such as "Delivering as One", which led to effective and efficient results on the ground through a coordinated and targeted approach that was more responsive to the needs of Governments. Such innovations were essential if the United Nations was to do more to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide and to support wider development issues.

34. The global effort to advance progress on women's and children's health was a historic opportunity to put an end to the death of mothers during childbirth. It was time for the private sector to join donors and partner countries in making a contribution, alongside civil society and philanthropists. The United Kingdom would play its part in supporting the effort.

35. Maternal health included the spacing and timing of pregnancies. More than 215 million women did not have access to modern methods of family planning. The real consequences of that unmet demand included 75 million unintended pregnancies that every year led to 20 million unsafe abortions and nearly 70,000 maternal deaths. Improving reproductive and maternal health was key to poverty eradication; women must have greater choice and access to family planning and safer births if communities were to be lifted from desperate poverty. The United Kingdom would make that a priority in all its bilateral programmes with United Nations agencies.

36. **Ms. Khattab** (Egypt), Minister of State for Family and Population Affairs, said that Egypt valued the focus of the substantive session on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which was a huge challenge but an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Egypt would enhance its efforts in that regard.

37. The review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had been a landmark event, providing an opportunity for States to take stock of progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The collective efforts of the United Nations and its Member States had empowered women, hundreds of millions of whom had been freed from discrimination and violence and were enjoying their rights to education, employment and participation. Many were in leading and decision-making positions.

38. A proud achievement of the United Nations was its human rights system. The transparency built into the reporting process and the constructive dialogue on State party reports had enabled a focus on, inter alia, women and children and the system had revealed linkages and interdependence between their rights. Those linkages had been reinforced by the universal periodical review. The Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and special sessions of the General Assembly all bore testament to the success of the system.

39. States had been encouraged to enforce legislation protecting the rights of women and children. Strong national entities had been established to monitor those rights and the role of civil society had been recognized. Under the leadership of its First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak, Egypt had made gender equality and the empowerment of women a political commitment and a priority, and it had adopted a rights-based integrated approach to development.

40. Egypt had allocated additional resources to supporting equality and the empowerment of women and had come a long way. Over the years, it had established a number of entities to monitor the rights of women and children, culminating in the establishment in 2009 of the Ministry for Family and Population. Egypt had mainstreamed women's human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development and participation, in all its poverty eradication policies and programmes. Women enjoyed equal civil and political rights and the right to participate in economic, social and cultural development. Building women's capacities to participate in economic management and processes — a priority of the National Council for Women — had had a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth. Indeed, greater economic empowerment of women was central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Constitution had been amended to allocate 64 seats to women in the Egyptian Parliament, and Egyptian women were serving in Government, the judiciary, academia and as regional governors.

41. Egypt was active in promoting women's rights at the regional and international levels. Its First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak, had helped to found the Organization of Arab Women, supported by Arab First Ladies, and her Women's International Peace Movement was combating trafficking in persons, including through the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. These efforts had been recognized in a July 2009 declaration of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Egypt had also adopted domestic anti-trafficking legislation.

42. Egyptian society, through the institution of the family, had raised men's and boys' awareness of their role in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women, and it had launched a movement to break taboos and uphold the rights of girls. An early partner in the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, Egypt was promoting the right of girls to quality active learning. Female genital mutilation had been criminalized and offenders in cases of child marriage had been brought to justice. Christian and Muslim religious leaders had combined their efforts to show their religions' inherent respect for women. Correct information and enlightened interpretations of religious texts had been disseminated.

43. Egypt supported the establishment of the new gender entity to consolidate United Nations efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. As Co-Chair of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, Egypt had worked to reach common ground so that the new entity could start its work on a solid foundation.

44. The concluding observations and general comments of treaty bodies must receive sustained attention to ensure that they become an integral part of United Nations efforts to empower women, fulfil their rights and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The reform of such bodies must continue with a view to guaranteeing democratic practices in the United Nations. He called for closer interaction and coordination between New York and Geneva on human rights issues and a stronger role for the Human Rights Council in monitoring women and children's rights. The overall goal must be the implementation of all the resolutions and recommendations adopted, and of the Monterrey Consensus and the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women. Greater coordination among United Nations agencies, and bilateral and multilateral donors would be equally vital, and an enabling environment would help civil society to play a responsible role. The global community must also address discrimination and violence against women in armed conflicts and under foreign occupation, in particular Palestinian women.

45. **Ms. Bachelet** (Chile), former President of Chile, said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted 15 years earlier, were important for women's rights, gender equality and female empowerment all over the world. The international community must turn the Beijing principles into concrete actions and encourage all Governments and civil society organizations to ensure real equality for women. She stressed the need to be aware of those places where women experienced multiple forms of discrimination, oppression and violence for cultural and religious reasons was particularly important and to proclaim solidarity with women who were subjugated or in situations of semi-slavery. Such situations were not tolerable and must be decisively condemned.

46. Gender equality was an expression of human rights, which were universal. Women's rights were human rights, and no philosophical, political, religious or other reasons could justify violation of those basic ideals. A monumental and consistent effort was required on the part of the international community to break the inertia of injustice and put an end to the institutions, laws and customs that perpetuated gender inequality.

47. The Beijing Declaration had increased awareness of the need to change structures which subjugated women, yet, progress was uneven across the world. In some countries, women held high positions, while in others, there were few opportunities for them to work or participate in civic affairs, and they suffered severe discrimination. There must be de jure and de facto gender equality. Women must have greater decision-making power, and empowerment must be a reality. It was necessary to leave behind archaic customs, sexist prejudices and confinement to female roles established by patriarchy.

48. Her election as the first woman President of Chile since the restoration of democracy in 1990 had been a cultural watershed. On the day she assumed the Presidency, thousands of women in Chile had donned the Presidential sash to show that they, too, felt that they were entering the Presidential palace. Much progress had been made during her term of office in the area of social protection. To make women more visible, the Cabinet of Ministers and Vice Ministers had, for the first time, had equal numbers of men and women. Female leadership had caused unease in some political circles. Steps had been taken to increase women's participation in civil society and in decision-making in a range of areas.

49. Throughout history, leadership and its associated qualities had always been regarded as masculine. She had received far more criticism as President merely because she was a woman. Many people had expected her to prove that she was qualified for office. Others had viewed her election as a sign that sexism had died out. That was not the case, and her errors had been judged more severely than those made by men. However, ultimately, it had been demonstrated that women could lead as effectively as men.

50. During her Presidency, programmes had been developed to provide managerial training for women and access to credit. A law had been passed guaranteeing equal pay for men and women doing the exact same work. Pension system reform had enabled thousands of women who had been excluded from the job market or held jobs without benefits to receive a guaranteed monthly pension starting at age 65. Initiatives in support of women were beneficial to society as a whole, including men.

51. Reproductive rights and maternal health had been strengthened. Birth control legislation had been broadened and emergency contraception legalized. Measures had been adopted to make early childhood education more available to those with limited means.

52. Women must be better represented in decision-making. Gender quotas, transparent hiring practices and awareness campaigns would help to increase their role in public life. Political parties should commit to achieving gender parity in their leadership and among the candidates put up for elections.

53. Following the earthquake in southern Chile the previous February, many women had led the way in finding solutions for their communities. Hundreds of women had come together to meet the needs of those around them. That had also been the case in Haiti. That was true leadership.

54. While much remained to be done in the area of gender equality, her outlook, based on her own experience, was optimistic. Women could make their voices heard and make an ever-greater impact on the path towards a more just social order. Institutions must be placed at the disposition of the community, leading to gender equality and women's empowerment.

55. Economic growth was important, but shared progress and a greater culture of solidarity were important as well. The outlook and sensibility of women, based on dialogue and consensus-building, would be highly advantageous for society.

56. **Ms. Stewart** (Committee for Development Policy) said that progress on gender equality and women's empowerment was threatened by the world financial crisis, the recession and problems of food security. Huge gender gaps remained in the areas of women's and girls' education, training and health, access to resources and employment, freedom from violence, and decision-making and power.

57. Despite considerable progress in girls' access to education, female illiteracy remained high in some parts of the world. Efforts to reduce maternal mortality were meeting with failure. And while in the past decade, many countries had introduced land reforms allowing women to own or inherit land, custom and hierarchy often prevented them from exercising their rights.

58. While microcredit was often targeted at women, medium and large-scale bank credit remained an almost exclusively male domain. Unequal access to land and other assets made women a worse prospect for formal sector loans. Women's employment had increased, but they worked in poorly paid and vulnerable occupations. Their pay was universally below that of men for the same jobs. Worldwide, women's income ranged from 16 to 74 per cent of what men earned. Although, increasingly, women worked outside the home, their responsibility for household work had changed little. Greater support was also needed for child- and elder-care.

59. The least progress of all had been made in curbing violence against women. Trade in women for sexual exploitation was estimated at $3 billion per year, but domestic violence represented the greatest threat to women. Across the world, 16 to 50 per cent of women had been assaulted at some point in their lives.

60. Women's access to decision-making and power had improved. Since 1975, women's representation in parliaments had risen from 11 to 19 per cent, and in the past decade, women in 25 countries had become speakers or presiding officers of parliament for the first time.

61. Women in deprived groups were the worst off, as they had to cope with gender biases in society at large and particularly strong gender discrimination within their own groups. To address that problem, the situation of indigenous groups generally as well as that of women must be improved.

62. Despite progress since Beijing, women were not fully mainstreamed in development policy. Continued progress was threatened by several intersecting crises that affected both men and women, but women were particularly vulnerable. The crises accentuated existing inequalities because cuts in social spending led to increases in the burden of unpaid work borne by women, and labour market restructuring meant that women were increasingly the labour of last resort in low-wage jobs lacking benefits. Finally, tensions from economic hardship and shifting gender roles in the family gave rise to domestic and other violence against women.

63. Severe gaps in sex-disaggregated data made it difficult to assess the impact of crises on gender. Available data undercounted women's work. Women's substantial contribution to housework was unvalued or undervalued in labour statistics, and because women were largely represented in the informal sector, they did not show up in labour statistics and did not have access to formal safety nets. Stimulus packages in response to crises had shown little gender sensitivity. They should be designed to protect a wider range of workers or unemployed people, with emphasis on

people with low incomes. Those economies which had had good social protection systems before the crisis had provided support during the crisis. The effect of schemes introduced after a crisis erupted was often too little, too late.

64. The ongoing crises were an opportunity for Governments and the international community to mainstream gender-related objectives into policies. Greater priority should be given to ensuring that women had direct access to land and assets. Monetary authorities should guarantee microfinance programmes sponsored by financial institutions. Sadly, a new round of cuts in developed countries would threaten global recovery and lead to cuts in developing countries, followed by reductions in aid that could seriously impede the advancement of women.

Annual ministerial review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women

Policy messages from the annual ministerial review preparatory meetings

65. **Ms. Diop** (Senegal), Minister of State, the Family, Women's Organizations and Early Childhood, presenting the conclusions of the African regional preparatory meeting on women and health, held in Dakar on 12 and 13 January 2010, said that participants in the meeting had included several ministers from African countries responsible for family and health, as well as representatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. Gender equality and women's empowerment had been stressed, and discussions had focused on reducing maternal and child mortality and stepping up efforts against HIV/AIDS.

66. Achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 required maintaining or increasing social expenditures for the most vulnerable, improving sanitation conditions and creating comprehensive development policies to help women break the vicious circle resulting from a lack of empowerment.

67. Together, those conditions should lead to improvement in health care; promote women's legal rights and their increased empowerment in addressing HIV/AIDS; advance gender equality, particularly for the most vulnerable; promote women's independence and access to health services, jobs and assets; improve infrastructure and telecommunications networks to combat poverty; increase women's participation in decision-making to reduce illiteracy and provide access to decent work; support collaboration with the private sector, civil society and local communities; provide adequate funding for health care from national budgets; and improve regional coordination of health care.

68. To promote maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, a number of measures had been proposed. They included improving prenatal care, care during delivery and post-natal and emergency obstetric care; strengthening the role and status of midwives as well as their contact and communication with local communities, establishing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and family planning services as well as programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, provide abortions in safe conditions and respond to sexual violence; putting an end to physical and sexual violence and genital mutilation; providing sex education for young people; bridging the gender gap in HIV/AIDS services; eliminating the inequality women faced in all areas, particularly in the job market; establishing effective legal frameworks, consistent with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; mainstreaming gender into health policies and budgets; reducing gender inequality caused by financial hurdles, including through social safety nets, greater training opportunities and access to loans and microcredit; promoting gender equality in decision-making at all levels; providing for participation by civil society, the private sector, religious bodies and traditional practitioners; broadly disseminating information on women's health, using information and communication technologies; stepping up efforts to provide appropriate financing, particularly through compliance with the commitment set out in the 2001 Abuja Declaration to invest 15 per cent of the national budget in health; and strengthening the capacities of health professionals to provide quality health care to women.

69. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Observer for Liberia), Minister of Agriculture, said that the Global Preparatory Meeting for the 2010 annual ministerial review, on the theme "Who feeds the world in 2010 and beyond? Rural women as agents of change and champions of global food security", had focused on the role of rural women in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 1. There had been a tendency in recent years for women to be perceived as a vulnerable

group rather than as key contributors to development; however, that perception was now being corrected. The dialogue at the Global Preparatory Meeting had shown a willingness among Member States, United Nations agencies and others to identify the concrete actions needed to support the contribution of rural women in reducing poverty, improving food security,' and promoting economic and social development. The Council had also highlighted the need for priority action and partnership-building in support of rural women's rights. In that connection, she welcomed the language of the draft ministerial declaration of the Council's 2010 high-level segment (E/2010/L.8), which recognized the importance of maintaining a focus on the empowerment of rural women.

70. The panel of policymakers and practitioners had made a number of practical recommendations. Firstly, there was a need for increased priority investment in agriculture and rural women, with country-led investment plans backed by appropriate legal and policy frameworks to realize women's productive potential. Secondly, it was important to view women as stakeholders, not beneficiaries, in all national development and food security policies and to recognize their role as agricultural producers, entrepreneurs and managers of natural resources. The contribution of women in the agricultural sector should be made visible by improving local and national data collection, and a larger share of programming resources should reach women farmers and agricultural producers. Stronger legal frameworks would ensure equal access by women to productive resources, including land, credit, technologies, training, markets and information. Support should also be given to an agricultural research agenda that focused on rural women's needs for modern agricultural technologies, equipment and means of communication.

71. The panel at the Global Preparatory Meeting had also recommended moving away from the "one size fits all" approach and implementing holistic policies and programmes that addressed women's productive and reproductive roles, including through social safety nets, nutrition and health programmes, and action against gender-based violence, and took into account the occupational diversity, ethnic identity and traditional knowledge of rural women. It had stressed the need to ensure accountability by monitoring the implementation of existing commitments in support of agriculture and rural development, and evaluating their impact on the economic empowerment of rural women. Concrete measures must be taken to facilitate participation by women and women's organizations in decision-making in local, national, regional and global forums on food security, agriculture, rural development, the environment and climate change; women's organizations and female leadership in farmers' organizations should also be supported as an important means of achieving the empowerment of rural women. Lastly, empowerment was an important tool for enabling men as well as women to overcome poverty. Men could be powerful advocates for women's rights and gender equality and must therefore be part of the dialogue.

72. The policy messages from the Global Preparatory Meeting should now be taken to the forthcoming High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, whose outcome should reflect the agreement of world leaders to keep the spotlight on the empowerment of rural women and smallholder farmers. Delegations should also continue the current discussions in other forums, including the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2012, which would also focus on the empowerment of rural women.

73. **Ms. Davis**, Academy Award-winning actor, speaking on behalf of the organizers of the Council's special event on the theme "engaging philanthropy to promote women's empowerment and gender equality", held on 22 February, said that over 500 representatives from the private sector, philanthropic institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia had engaged in discussions with Member States and United Nations experts on the priority themes of ending violence against women and girls and promoting the economic empowerment of women. At the event, the Secretary-General had observed that realizing the Millennium Development Goals depended fundamentally on the empowerment of women.

74. All participants had agreed that they must work together on both priority issues. To that end, strong leadership was indispensable in both the public and private sectors; chief executive officers, for example, should promote a culture of respect for women and girls and encourage their leadership potential, while governments and international institutions should implement legislation to prevent and prosecute violence against women and girls.

75. Additional human and financial resources should be made available in support of proven good practices, which should also be documented and shared through various platforms. Hasbro's multifunctional centres for women and girls in Afghanistan and Sudan, run in partnership with NGOs, were an example of good practice that should be scaled up in and across countries. Investing in girls and empowering them as agents of change was also crucial for ending violence against women and girls and promoting their economic empowerment. Making long-term commitments to women and girls by providing multi-year funding was important in order to make successful programmes more sustainable and provide opportunities to extend them to other communities, countries and regions. The involvement of men and boys in campaigns to end violence against women and change attitudes regarding women's roles in the household and the economy at large, through such initiatives as the White Ribbon Campaign, and the Secretary-General's Network of Men Leaders, was considered highly significant.

76. On the issue of economic empowerment, participants at the special event had stressed the importance of enhancing women's access to property and economic assets, including agricultural inputs, finance and markets, as well as implementing legal reform to protect their property and land rights. Such opportunities, which should be supported by local governments, would only be viable if women and girls also received appropriate education and training. Moreover, as more women were integrated into the workforce, increased efforts to achieve decent working conditions would be critical for success.

77. In her capacity as founder of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, she had pointed out that improving gender representation in the media, especially in content aimed at children, could have a powerful impact in terms of influencing and changing attitudes towards women and girls; such media often displayed stark gender inequalities and disempowering female images, which shaped how women and girls were viewed in the world.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

National voluntary presentations (E/2010/65): *Brazil*

78. **The President** said experience had shown that linking the discussion of policy options to specific country experiences had resulted in a more pragmatic debate about the issues. The national voluntary presentations made during the annual ministerial review provided an opportunity for Member States to share an assessment of a specific country's progress towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and to explore possible ways to address lags in implementation. The annual ministerial review reflected the growing partnership between developed and developing countries, especially with regard to attaining the MDGs. That partnership was key to the successful achievement of those Goals.

79. He invited Mr. Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations, to act as moderator for the national voluntary presentation of Brazil.

Brazil (E/2010/65)

80. **Ms. Freire** (Brazil), Minister, Department of Women's Policies, accompanying her presentation with a computerized slide presentation, said that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women was crucial for Brazil's development, which was based not only on economic growth and environmental sustainability but also on social justice and inclusion, especially for the most disadvantaged in society. The Department of Women's Policies, established in 2003 by the then newly elected President Lula da Silva, had organized the first National Women's Policy Conference in 2004 as part of the new Government's strategy of formulating policy in the light of consultations with society. The Conference had involved some 120,000 women at the municipal, provincial and national levels, who had worked with the Government to establish the principles and guidelines of the National Women's Policy Plan, which was essentially aimed at developing specific policies for women and mainstreaming gender in all other Government policies. The Policy Plan, implemented between 2005 and 2007, had a number of strategic goals, including economic independence and equality for women in work- and citizenship-related matters, inclusive and non-discriminatory education, combating violence against women and oversight and monitoring of the Plan.

81. Another National Women's Policy Conference had been held in 2007, with even greater participation by women at all levels, in order to evaluate the implementation of the first Plan and discuss the

participation of women in decision-making positions. A second Policy Plan with an expanded scope covering additional areas such as development policies, income distribution and the transfer of funds, the safety of women in cities, women's access to credit and the need to combat racism, had been established and was being implemented in 2008-2011. The President of Brazil had recently demonstrated his continued commitment to the empowerment of women by converting the Department of Women's Policies into a Ministry within the Office of the President of the Republic.

82. One of the priority components of the National Women's Policy Plan was the National Violence against Women Policy. In 2005, as part of that policy, a 24-hour women's services hotline, "*Ligue 180*" had been launched to address the needs of women in situations of violence, as well as to generate data about domestic and family violence against women. In 2006, the Domestic and Family Violence Act ("Maria da Penha Act"), a comprehensive new law on preventing, protecting against and punishing violence against women had been adopted. In the period since the adoption of that Act, calls to the "Llame 180" hotline had significantly increased, which showed that women facing situations of violence became more willing to seek help and information when they knew that they were protected by national legislation.

83. Lastly, in 2007, the federal Government had launched the National Violence against Women Pact, which represented an integrated approach to the problem of violence against women and had been developed in partnership with Brazil's state and municipal governments. Owing to Brazil's federative structure, the federal Government had been required to work to convince each municipal and state government to accept the Pact; to date, 22 states had fully signed up to it. A national council for monitoring and management of the Pact had been established, and each state government was also required to establish a technical council in order to be eligible to receive resources for its implementation. The Pact focused not only on preventing domestic and intra-family violence but also on protecting women's sexual and reproductive rights and combating the feminization of HIV/AIDS; combating the sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents and the trafficking of women; and promoting the human rights of women in prison.

84. Although Brazil had achieved significant progress in the area of women's rights, its large size and the unequal distribution of wealth among its regions represented a challenge for implementing policies at the national level. Moreover, its federative structure, comprising 26 states and one Federal District with different functions and powers, meant that the federal Government had to negotiate with each state government in order for national policies to be implemented throughout the country.

85. Brazil faced three major challenges. Firstly, major inequalities among women in Brazil — and in particular the disadvantages suffered by the black population, owing to the legacy of slavery — made it difficult to ensure that advances in the areas of gender equality and empowerment benefited every woman in Brazil, regardless of her race, the region where she was born, and whether she lived in an urban or rural environment. The federal Government was seeking to address such inequalities through income redistribution policies, increases in minimum income levels, the Family Grant programme involving direct transfers of funds, and a number of other measures. While they did not exclusively target women, such measures were extremely beneficial to the many women in Brazilian society who were particularly disadvantaged.

86. The second major challenge faced by Brazil related to gender inequality in its labour market. Such inequality would not be addressed until reproductive responsibilities were shared equally between women and men and until maternity and caregiving were seen as social functions rather than invisible tasks for which women were solely responsible.

87. Thirdly, the issue of women's political participation needed to be addressed in order for men and women to obtain and exercise political power equally and fairly. Although Brazilian electoral law stated that each party should fill a minimum of 30 per cent of electoral quotas with candidates of each sex, that requirement had not yet been met. A recent change in the law now stipulated compliance with those quota requirements in the party nominations for the presidential, federal and state elections to be held in October. It was encouraging to note that there would be two women candidates for Brazil's presidency in the forthcoming elections.

88. Lastly, the commendable efforts of the United Nations in support of women's rights to date could be made even more effective if the new United Nations gender entity was established and given the necessary

political power and resources to continue supporting women in their struggle for empowerment and equality.

89. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala), moderator, noting that both the Permanent Representative and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations were women, said that the Brazilian Government's policies were an inspiration for South-South cooperation in Latin America.

90. **Ms. García Gaytán** (Observer for Mexico), reviewer, said that her Government and that of Brazil had the same goals regarding the advancement of women. She noted that of Brazil's 27 states, only 23 had women's rights councils and only 22 had gender bodies; she wondered whether the remaining states were nonetheless implementing the National Women's Policy Plan.

91. It would be useful to know whether there was a time limit for benefiting from the Family Grant programme and, if the programme had been evaluated, to what extent it had reduced poverty among women. Further information on efforts to increase the enrolment rate for girls and women at all levels of study would be appreciated. She would also like to learn more about the impact of the National Maternal Mortality Reduction Pact and its implementation at the state level.

92. It would be useful to know whether the National Violence against Women Policy and Pact addressed the issue of violence in the workplace and in the schools, whether special courts had been established to deal with violence against women and what was being done to ensure the economic independence of women who were leaving prisons or shelters. She was pleased that the Government was working to address the global problem of trafficking in women and was especially interested in the pilot project that involved setting up a network of services for victims and strengthening prevention efforts.

93. Lastly, she stressed the difficulty of promoting parity in decision-making posts pursuant to the Quito Consensus, adopted in 2007 at the Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and wondered how Brazil's political parties had reacted to the Government's efforts in that regard.

94. **Mr. Barton** (United States of America), reviewer, said that the representative of Brazil's presentation had been thorough, well organized and objective. His Government and the Government of Brazil had recently signed a memorandum of understanding for continued cooperation. Brazilian President Lula's activist agenda could serve as a model for other countries; the decision to place the Department of Women's Policies within the Office of the President of the Republic, for example, might usefully be imitated. However, the Government's many initiatives could not be pursued simultaneously by all states. He wondered how their benefits were being weighed, which of the new laws and bodies had been most transformative, what the key ingredients of success had proved to be and what areas had proved less successful, what was being done to involve men, what population groups were of greatest concern and what was being done to reach them.

95. The Government's report (E/2010/65) suggested that its focus was on rural women, but the problems of urban women might be more difficult to address. Further information on initiatives targeting black and indigenous women, businesswomen and women politicians would also be welcome. He was particularly interested in the Family Grant programme; that model of direct assistance channelled through women would need to be replicated in other countries, especially in light of the current economic crisis.

96. **Ms. Freire** (Brazil), Minister, Department of Women's Policies, said that the Family Grant was channelled through women because experience had shown that women were more likely than men to do whatever was necessary to feed their families; unemployed women did not spend their time at the local bar, drinking with their jobless friends. As in Mexico, which had a similar programme, there had been much discussion of the issue of conditionalities. But funding alone could not help women emerge from abject poverty; they must also be empowered. Giving money directly to women changed the pattern of consumption of poor families; when women were able to set their families' priorities, they typically focused on food, clothing and school materials. Such women were also able to play a new role in their communities since their husbands must consult them before taking decisions that affected the family. If a woman with a sick child could not get medicine from the local health clinic, she could purchase it from a pharmacy; even if she did not have cash in hand, she could negotiate because it was known that she had a steady source of funds. The greatest benefit of the Family Grant was

that the women who received it had come to see themselves as citizens with rights — to health, education and a life with dignity — and had begun to demand the enjoyment of those rights.

97. The Family Grant programme had an ongoing monitoring system. The goal was to help women exit from the programme by providing them with job training and creating jobs for them; "employment for all" was the key to sustainable development.

98. The Government was working to convince the remaining states to set up women's rights councils and gender bodies, including by providing financial incentives. However, the National Women's Policy Plan was already being implemented through the existing state bodies.

99. In Brazil, women were better educated than men at all levels and accounted for 72 per cent of all university graduates. However, some fields of employment, such as engineering, computer science and economics, were still dominated by men. The problem was not to educate women, but to encourage them to enter the scientific and technical fields and to ensure that education did not reinforce existing forms of prejudice and sex discrimination so that boys and girls could live under conditions of equality and solidarity. The Gender and Diversity at School Programme, offered at the nation's 20 universities, had trained some 30,000 teachers to address issues such as gender, race and sexual orientation in the public schools.

100. The Government was working with state and municipal governments and civil society to reduce the maternal mortality rate, which remained unacceptably high even though it had fallen from 140 to 75 per 100,000 live births. That effort included attempts to eliminate poverty, educate poor women and ensure the exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights. The induced abortion rate could be reduced through family planning. There was universal access to contraception; women could get birth control pills from their local health centres or purchase them at a pharmacy at discounts of up to 90 per cent. However, a continuing effort was needed with a focus on the states in northern and north-eastern Brazil, where poverty was the worst.

101. The Domestic and Family Violence Act ("Maria da Penha Act"), as its name suggested, focused on domestic violence. In a few years, it would be amended to include other forms of violence against women. Even now, however, training programmes were provided in an attempt to address the issue of violence in the workplace.

102. Efforts to increase the number of women in positions of power had met with a great deal of resistance from political parties since for every woman elected to public office, a man must step down.

103. Brazil was proud to host the Eleventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Brasília from 13 to 16 July 2010, and was actively engaged in regional cooperation. For example, the seal of approval awarded under its Pro-Gender-Equity Programme had been based on a similar programme implemented by Mexico.

104. **Mr. Chicoty** (Observer for Angola) asked whether racial discrimination was seen as a serious problem in Brazil and whether there were specific policies aimed at empowering black women.

105. **Mr. Rutilo** (Argentina) asked what could be done to promote regional coordination on women's issues.

106. **Ms. Skalli** (Morocco), noting with concern the comment by the representative of Brazil that Brazil's political parties were resistant to the National Women's Policy Plan, asked whether there had also been resistance to initiatives aimed at combating violence against women. It was important for the male-dominated Government to demonstrate its support for the advancement of women. She wondered whether the Brazilian Government practised gender-sensitive budgeting.

107. She would be interested to learn whether Family Grant monies had in some cases been misused and how the authorities verified that the recipients were really in need.

108. **Ms. Freire** (Brazil), Minister, Department of Women's Policies, said that of all population groups, her country's rural women had made the greatest strides in organization and empowerment over the past few years.

109. In the past, the activity of women farmers had been viewed as an extension of their domestic work and had gone unrecognized. However, the National Family Farming Programme (PRONAF) included a special line of credit for rural women and helped women to organize at all levels of the production chain, from farming to the sale of crops. Under the

National Rural Women Workers Documentation Programme, mobile units were sent into rural areas in order to issue women birth certificates and other civil registration documents that allowed them to exercise their rights as citizens.

110. Contrary to the myth of interracial harmony in Brazil, statistics revealed serious inequalities in the areas of, inter alia, education, income, housing and sanitation. For example, while the average level of education had risen in all population groups, it was only in the past five years that the education gap between black and white Brazilians had begun to narrow. Black Brazilians had formed a movement and were endeavouring to make society aware of those problems. Since 2003, President Lula had made it clear that racial and gender inequality were structural bases for exclusion in Brazilian society and that specific strategies for addressing those problems were needed. The Government had set quotas and policies in specific areas; for example, the National Women's Policy Plan included a component on black women's health.

111. Brazil was involved in a Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) project on trafficking in persons, implemented in cooperation with Spain. It would soon open a centre for women victims of trafficking along the border with Argentina and Uruguay; an agreement had also been signed with a view to the opening of a similar centre along the border with Venezuela.

112. True gender equality could not be achieved without the support of the nation's men. The organization, Homems Unidos pelo Fim da Violência Contra as Mulheres (Men United against Violence against Women), had been established in 2008 and entire football teams had joined its campaign. The National Violence against Women Pact included rehabilitation and awareness-raising programmes for abusers.

113. Women's policies must be publicized and funded. Gender-sensitive budgeting was essential to the success of the National Women's Policy Plan; each of its nine implementing ministries was required to allocate funds to policies under the Plan and each of the country's four-year national plans included 10 strategic goals, one of which was to combat gender, racial and ethnic inequalities and to strengthen democracy.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.